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JANUARY 14, 2022 | VOLUME 13 | ISSUE 2

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Housing for the People: Stories from
the front lines. **Page 8**

TRE
MCALISTER,
#519

ASK YOUR
VENDOR:
WHAT'S YOUR
NEW YEAR'S
RESOLUTION?
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GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.



'Opportunity'
is the most
important
concept in We
the People
Opportunity
Farm. **Page 6**

THIS PAPER WAS BOUGHT FROM

venmo



@groundcovernews, include vendor name and vendor #

MLK day **EVENTS**



U-M MLK SYMPOSIUM: THIS IS AMERICA
January 17, 10:00 -11:30 a.m. (online)
oami.umich.edu/um-mlk-symposium

OPEN MIC: WHAT IS YOUR DREAM?
January 17, 4:00 p.m.
Ann Arbor Community Commons Plaza

RISING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE WEEKEND CELEBRATION
January 14-17, Eastern Michigan University
emich.edu/mlk/

GROUNDCOVER NEWS

CREATING **OPPORTUNITY** AND A **VOICE** FOR LOW-INCOME PEOPLE WHILE TAKING ACTION TO END HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY.

Groundcover News, a 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in April 2010 as a means to empower low-income persons to make the transitions from homeless to housed, and from jobless to employed.

Vendors purchase each biweekly copy of Groundcover News at our office for 50 cents. This money goes towards production costs. Vendors work selling the paper on the street for \$2, keeping all income and tips from each sale.

Street papers like Groundcover News exist in cities all over the United States, as well as in more than 40 other countries, in an effort to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people and combat the increase in poverty. We are proudly a member of the International Network of Street Papers.

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ASK YOUR VENDOR

What's your New Year's resolution?

I'm starting yoga in the nude and mindful eating.
— Lit Kurtz, #159

Become a better me, elevate.
— Jay Gordon, #533

I want to take another step towards freedom.
— Ken Parks, #490

Try to forgive more.
— Larzell Washington, #128

I'm going to stop eating red meat.
— Joe Woods, #103

Save enough money to get a brand new bicycle.
— Tony Schol, #9

To do better in my finances.
— James Tennant, #174

Get a new place, open a bank account, start being a pescatarian again. Maybe even go vegan!
— Tre McAlister, #519

I am going to continue to read, practice on building tiny changes and doing more behaviors linked to my aspirations.
— Hosea' Hill, #532

My New Year's goal is to keep myself and my things more beautiful and neater. This will make me feel more joyful, more relaxed and more comfortable. Life is easier when things are organized.
— Denise Shearer, #485

Live with more patience and kindness. Live with the three pillars of health: movement, nutrition, and rest.
— Will Shakespeare, #258

What would YOU ask?

If you have a question you would like Groundcover vendors to answer in this column, email us at contact@groundcovernews.com

We will be featuring vendor responses in future issues.

Dude, finish your breakfast



JAY GORDON
Groundcover vendor No. 533

I became a cook in the military because I love the culinary arts. I truly enjoy making food as an experience for people to enjoy. The easiest meal for everyone to make is probably breakfast. Most people, I feel, get their first go-around in the kitchen with breakfast.

Now, even though it's for 300 people, breakfast in the military is where you start. Two meat options, a starch, a hot cereal, either pancakes, waffles, French toast or something like that, boiled eggs and eggs to order. We also had the fruit bar, yogurt, cereal and granola as well. I loved working eggs to order. I could remember people's daily orders after a week or so and could cook about eight orders at a time. This helped me move the line along faster because "before you could order them they were on your plate." My personal motto.

So one day I arrived at work, about 15 minutes early, nobody there but that's cool. I unlocked the kitchen and turned everything on, and began to start breakfast. I started the oatmeal, the boiled eggs, the biscuits and gravy, waffles, hash browns, and corned beef hash. I was constantly looking at the clock and nobody was showing up. It was 5:30am at this point and nobody was there. I laid out the

cereals, turned on the juice machines, started the coffee, cut fruit ... and now I was worried.

It was five minutes until we opened and nobody was there. I was stressing because for one, I can't serve food and cook eggs. Two, if they didn't show up we were all going to be in trouble. It doesn't matter that I was in the right, we were in the wrong.

Literally at 6 a.m. the other five cooks ran into the kitchen and got right to apologizing and work. I said it's cool and decided to do the honor of making my plate and eating breakfast, and they understood and were cool about it.

Not three bites into my food, in walked one of my supervisors. He looked like rapper Dick Ross, or even better, wrestler Mark Henry. Roarish personalities.

"Eggs!" he screamed on the mess

decks. (Sidenote: I got so good on eggs they started calling me Young Eggs). "Why are you sitting down eating with the line backed up?" He was surely upset. I didn't want to tell on my coworkers, so I gathered up my food and went back into the kitchen. That's when one of my coworkers stepped up and pulled my supervisors to the side and told him what really happened, what I had done to help — not hinder — the situation. He walked over to me and said quietly, "Dude, finish your breakfast."

I knew it was his way of apologizing, but also I learned how important perception is. It looked like I was just twiddling my thumbs while others were working hard to keep up, but that wasn't the reality. Perception and what is being seen and shown are important but truth is what really matters.

My coworker stepping up changed my supervisor's perception of reality. Also "praise in public, punish in private." Show the world your people's accomplishments so that nobody can see your holes. Snakes love holes to crawl into. When the outside sees that all you do is praise people and doesn't know what happens behind closed doors how can the opposition enter?

Groundcover Vendor Code

While Groundcover is a non-profit, and paper vendors are self-employed contractors, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

The following is our **Vendor Code of Conduct**, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

- Groundcover will be distributed for a voluntary donation. I agree not to ask for more than the cover price or solicit donations by any other means.
- When selling Groundcover, I will always have the current biweekly issue of Groundcover available for customer purchase.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper or selling past monthly issues.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers and refrain from wearing it or other Groundcover gear when engaged in other activities.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover Staff and will not sell to or buy papers from other Groundcover vendors, especially vendors who have

been suspended or terminated.

- I agree to treat all customers, staff, and other vendors respectfully. I will not "hard sell," threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover.
- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor in downtown areas. I will also abide by the Vendor corner policy.
- I understand that Groundcover strives to be a paper that covers topics of homelessness and poverty while providing sources of income for the homeless. I will try to help in this effort and spread the word.

If you would like to report a violation of the Vendor Code please email contact@groundcovernews.com or fill out the contact form on our website.

Reflections from Seattle

In downtown Seattle at Pike Place Market, southwest of the famous Space Needle, you can find charismatic fishermen selling their freshly-caught, kindergartener-sized fish refrigerated on large bins of ice. The fish's glassy eyes stare out blankly. Across the way, a grocer sells almost any variety and color fruit you can imagine. Around the corner, a man in a purple coat tends to the shelves of a leftist book shop. It is spitting rain. However, the locals seem accustomed to the gray skies and monotonous light rain that dumps for months on end.

The sun sets with an explosion of color, like one final hurrah, electrifying the sky in a vibrant orange before night sets in. The city life still goes on by the pale yellow of the street lights. Masked people stand by the bus stop, waiting. Suited women leave tall high-rise offices. Sounds of happy hour permeate from bars out into the street. An older man on the corner is blasting old school rap on his portable boombox. Dogs pull their owners from one interesting evening city scent to another. A small group of men near the dock smoke and drink on the public boardwalk.

The juxtaposition of wealth could not be anymore apparent. Within the same block, I passed both a man in worn jeans panhandling holding a warped cardboard sign and a group of men dressed in tuxedos and women in evening gowns leaving a club and entering an expensive-looking car complete with butterfly doors. Security guards patrol the heated, empty lobbies of luxury sky-rises, while an unseen soul shivers in a blue canvas tent just inside the alley.

Wealth inequality seems to be a constant horrid fact of life all across America. It's just that in Seattle, a city home to the third largest unhoused population in the USA, the inequality is just more visible. Neighborhoods of million dollar single-family homes exist just a few miles from shanty tent encampments and lines of rusted out RVs, decaying off the side of the road. Despite the fact that Seattlites on the whole favor progressive policies, especially compared to the rest of the U.S. population, they haven't been able to eliminate homelessness. Progress has been made, but often in a discouragingly slow manner.

As an example, consider the 2019 Mandatory Housing Affordability Act, which finally passed after over four years of discussion and planning. Called "a big step toward more affordable housing choices" by



BEN GIRODIAS
Groundcover vendor No. 258

Mayor Durcan and "better than nothing" by the more left-leaning city councilmember Sawant, this act rezones much of the city, allowing for more dense housing rather than only single family homes, as well as requiring that developers reserve 5-11% of new units for affordable housing. Endemic to most places, racist zoning policy has purposely excluded and created areas of wealth and poverty. Up-zoning, the practice of rezoning districts to allow for more dense housing units, is only the beginning of housing justice; it will take intensive active policy change to make up for past injustice. While the full impact of this act is still yet to be seen, it is nonetheless great to see a city council taking action.

I can't help but wonder what kinds of legislation would have passed if it weren't hamstrung by private self-interest and NIMBYs. NIMBYism (Not In My Backyard) can be a severe impediment to community betterment because this selfish philosophy sees exclusion as a way to better life. It would be doomed to fail if everyone tried to implement it: social and economic injustice can only be pushed off so far before some community or other must deal with them. Instead of NIMBYism, we must do our parts to care for our own community and the surrounding ones. This often means accepting discomfort for the sake of others' well-being, like wearing masks to stop the spread of COVID. If we all look out for each other, we will all be in a better place. It is easier said than done.

And this makes me think back to Ann Arbor. Certainly, it has its problems. But maybe it also has its solutions. I have learned so much from all the wonderful members of our community. I got to know wonderful vendors featured in this paper who speak out against the injustice they face and spread the word about these important issues; wonderful social workers who connect people to desperately

needed services, thereby getting them into housing; wonderful staff of the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County and Purple House, who run the organizations which provide emergency shelter for our most vulnerable community members; and wonderful organizers of Washtenaw Camp Outreach, who host community meals and get needed survival supplies to our members forced to brave the cold elements despite the numerous empty heated buildings all through the city.

To all of you, your effort goes farther than you may see. It is the collective and, unfortunately, often unacknowledged labor that betters our communities. The true statistic that matters is median well-being not the aggregate economic wealth produced (read GDP). Seriously, what is the point of producing more stuff if it doesn't get in the hands of those who need it? This is even more pertinent now if we want to avoid wide-scale environmental destruction, a seemingly necessary component of our current economy that blindly produces more and more stuff in the deluded dream of infinite economic growth on a finite planet. But this is all getting abstract. Day-to-day matters.

But it is difficult to find day-to-day strength to keep persisting in the face of looming obstacles. Some problems don't ever seem solvable. Mind boggling irrational contradictions fill our world and needlessly contribute to wide scale suffering.

For example, the world produces about 1.5 times the caloric needs of the world population and yet millions go hungry every day. In the United States alone, the census bureau finds around 14 million vacant homes in 2020, while the National Alliance to End Homelessness found about 600,000 people experience homelessness on a given night in the same year. This would imply that for every homeless person in this country, there exist 23 vacant homes.

And in the face of such enraging and stupid problems, each individual can only do so much. Some individuals can do nothing more than just survive that day. And yet they find strength for the next one. Others have the means and capacity to look beyond themselves and find the strength to reach out and pick up those who have fallen down.

I guess what I am really trying to say is thank you. Thank you to all our wonderful Ann Arbor community members for doing the unglamorous day to day work that betters our community.

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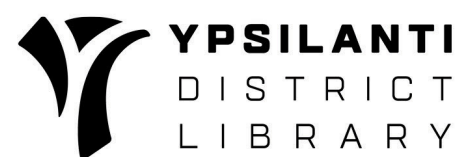
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Spring forward, feel your toes

At 79 years old I am learning to walk again. My right leg gave out in July, the same time the counterrevolution hit hard in Cuba. Every phenomenon has multiple causes. This was also two months after the J&J sarscovid2 vaccine. Pain, weakness and numbness drastically cut my activity. I took hot epsom salt baths and did lots of massages which became a loving fingertip exploration of painful spots.

The beautiful sound from chanting the mantra of Medicine Buddha brought some healing pleasure. Awareness in walking brought deep attention to my toes. The fatigue was fading by the end of August and I was walking well.

In the second week of December my left leg gave out. The intensity of the pain went deep to the bone and made for some sleepless nights. My skill in massage acupressure was challenged to the core. Hallelujah for the good it did as part of the cure. Blessings from sacred sound helped both my legs. TAYATA OM BEKANDZE BEKANDZE MAHA BEKANDZE RADZA SAMUDGATE SOHA. Once again I learned to feel my toes. Body, speech and mind become inseparable. Pain is an important Messenger who appreciates respect. There is always something to learn and practice in this very moment.



KEN PARKS
Groundcover vendor No. 490

It was observed by English speakers of the British colonies in America that their footprints had toes pointing out while Indian footprints had toes pointing straight ahead. Now that we know about the invention of the 'white race' and that the original people of Turtle Island are not Indians, maybe we can learn how to walk well. The physiology and anatomy of colonized walking was well summarized by Katie Jones on Quora responding to the question "Should my feet be in v-shape or straight while standing or walking?"

My theory and practice are at the point where I roll from the heel to toe, pronating from small toe to big toe as I spring forward. There is no sense of landing on the heel or of lifting the leg up as the spring from the toes finds a natural rhythm.

My main problem this year is that I cannot carry the load of previous years for any distance so I stash things at my safe spots. Since none of them are stable, the only home I have is my body. If you are at home in your body it is not a big deal if you are houseless. When your body breaks down you have some experience of being houseless and homeless.

A natural breath and sacred mantra can connect you to your only true home, the all good expanse of primordial purity. From there I began to walk slowly for short distances with no load.

Every phenomenon has multiple causes and healing may work on several before progress is made. Pelvic floor weakness syndrome, PFWS, resulted in two inguinal hernia surgeries before my research discovered PFWS in an article titled "Do Squats Not Kegels!" I believe in 2012 I learned that as civilization gave us chairs and toilets, we lost another range of motion that became the cause for PFWS. The pelvic area includes the hips which was the point of my recent uppermost pain.

So far I am healing with self-care but I will go to the best healers I know, if necessary. Upper cervical chiropractic and Zero Balance are my best

discoveries. Treatments can hold for several years, especially if I regularly do angel wings and pelvic tilts to keep range of motion.

Once you can move freely it opens your ability to experience the harmonious flow and learn common sense. It is said that common sense is the least common of all the senses. Everyone needs some kind of therapy.

Until we tap the collective wisdom and experience that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, we will be stuck at our current level of struggle characterized as gridlock. Complete healing is calling us to spring forward and feel our mind. Common sense is not a body of knowledge but a state of harmony. Go to michaelsamsel.com for his essay on therapy.

The goal is to be at home with our bodies, learn the unity of body, speech and mind in order to benefit Mother Earth and all our relations. Explore Ann Arbor Community Commons. I just joined their Facebook. Let us explore our reality by listening to "Call To Conscience, Breaking The Silence," the April 4, 1967 speech of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Tavis Smiley did an excellent program with Dr. King's speechwriter.

Stay strong, keep the faith.

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'Opportunity' is the most important concept in We the People Opportunity Farm

CYNTHIA PRICE
Editor

On a chilly day in October, Melvin Parson moved methodically across the field at We The People Opportunity Farm in Ypsilanti, tilling under this year's crops, preparing for the winter, and defining next year's beds. "This has been such a huge learning curve for me," he said. "And I try not to do too much of the work. But this year we were able to supply a lot of food to our neighbors, so it's worth it."

Good local food is not the only thing the farm contributes to the community. As a former social worker who got his degree from Eastern Michigan University after himself spending time incarcerated, Parson was looking for a way to help other re-entering citizens. As he started practicing social work, and after seeing the film Food Inc. and working on his own vegetable bed, he realized the healing and learning potential in food and farming.

He first started We the People Growers Association, an organization to support farmers of color, and when he had an offer of land from Ypsilanti's Grace Fellowship Church in 2017, that gave way to We The People Opportunity Farm, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

He decided to hire formerly incarcerated community members as paid interns, hoping to change their lives for the better. The farm's mission is "...to break the cycle of incarceration in Washtenaw County by investing in the employment and development of formerly incarcerated men and women through farming and community engagement."

Two years in, "I think we're doing

exceedingly well," he said with a modest smile, and he is not alone.

Ask intern Pony Bush, Groundcover vendor No. 305. "A friend brought me here and I was hired. I never did farm work, but it's all good. This is really the only job I got right now. It's been a good thing for me."

Or ask LaWanda Hollister, who was incarcerated for 36 years – a nearly unbelievable statistic based on her appearance and energy. "This has given me opportunities I wouldn't have otherwise had, so it most definitely has been appreciated," she said.

She added, "I personally like the fact that it's not only work but the opportunity to do other things so we can learn for the future." Interns are offered courses in job/life skills, such as resume building and finance and budgeting, as well as coaching from MichiganWorks! including a job-based needs assessment.

Expert consultant Keesa Johnson is currently working with Parson on further developing a curriculum to help the interns succeed. "We want them to learn trust, self-efficacy, self-reliance and sovereignty. Keesa's perfect to help them do that," Parson said.

The third intern in the 2021 season was LoGene, and there were three in 2020 as well. Hollister, who has some impressive expertise in food and nutrition, is now working at a food service job.

Pony Bush explained how difficult it is to find any job at all after getting out. "As soon as they see you were incarcerated, it's done. They even turned me down for ringing the bell for the Salvation Army. But I'm going to apply again," he said, nodding. He adds,

though, that he can still often do well selling Groundcover because "I know how to deal with the rejection."

Parson empathizes with how hard job-seeking is for former incarcerated. "That felony on my record sure put me behind the eight ball," he said. "The system isn't designed to rehabilitate. So there's a big challenge for people getting out."

Originally intending to get a degree from Washtenaw Community College in welding, Parson took a friend's advice and pursued a bachelor's degree in social work. "One of the options open to me was to get student loans, so that's the direction I went." He considers himself, above all else, as a champion of social justice and social equity. He also credits former School of Public Health student (and before that, also incarcerated) Rory Crook with helping him develop the ideas that became We The People Opportunity Farm.

Funding comes primarily from "supporters in the community," though Parson acknowledges a lot of assistance from United Way of Washtenaw County and the Ann Arbor Community Foundation.

Some income, approximately 20% of the budget, is derived from selling the small farm's produce. Currently, the farm sells to the Ypsilanti Food Co-op, the People's Co-op in Ann Arbor, Zingerman's Roadhouse, Zingerman's Deli, Detroit St. Filling Station, Frita Batidos, Juicy Kitchen, Food Gatherers, both Argus Farm Stop locations, Bell Flower and Maiz Mexican Cantina.

Parson is always working on partnerships, using what he calls his

superpower of being a "connector." He expresses gratitude to many members of his board who seem to share that superpower. In particular he mentions Victoria Burton Harris, the Washtenaw County Assistant Prosecutor.

Parson claims he gets as much out of the farm as any of the interns. "We get to come alongside people like Pony. I've watched him change over his internship. He takes more ownership and responsibility in situations. It's our goal to treat everyone with kindness and dignity, and that seems to rub off on them," he said.

He explained the joy of pondering the farm's ecosystem, with "moles and voles and rabbits and hawks," and the fact that it didn't exist before they began to work on it. It has helped him reconnect with his son.

"I often think about the ecosystem that's being built in my life," Parson said. "With my son, with the community and neighbors. I think about being able to buy a house that's a six minute walk from here, how I can walk over here and think on all of it. That creates a lot of gratitude."

"I believe that gratitude is better than happiness," he added.



Left and cover: Pony Bush, left, and LaWanda Hollister are two of the 2021 interns at the farm. Middle: Though the sign about kindness and dignity is new, the sentiment has driven WTPOF since before it started in 2018. Right: As fall comes to We the People Opportunity Farm in Ypsilanti, Melvin Parson takes a brief rest from his farming chores. Photo credits: Cynthia Price.

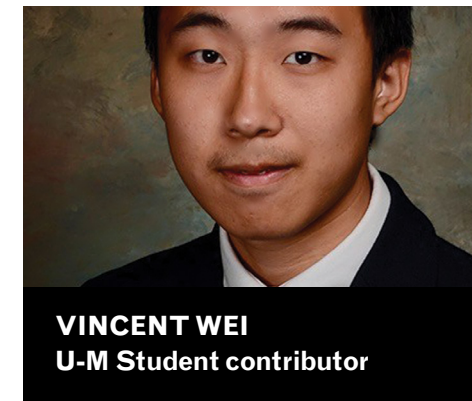


What hides beneath out talk about homelessness

Community engagement is a big concept. It's about service, altruism, bringing about social change and promoting welfare. For philanthropists, it might be a generous donation to local food banks; for policymakers, it might be an amendment to existing affordable housing strategies; for social workers, it might be a late-night visit to homeless shelters on New Year's Eve; however, for most, it's easier said than done.

As a freshman at the University of Michigan, I was privileged to have the opportunity to enroll in English 126 as my first-year writing course. I'd never expected community engagement to be a part of my college career, until I was taken off the waitlist of this course after two months of waiting. I knew that it was going to be something different and special. Over the course of the past semester, apart from honing our academic writing and analytical skills, we studied the issue of homelessness and its cyclical nature in our society, while engaging with the local Ann Arbor community in the form of writing opportunities provided by Groundcover News.

The past fifteen weeks of classes have provided me knowledge on the topic of homelessness and related



societal issues. The more I delved into the hidden sides of homelessness, the more urgent I felt that it needs to be properly dealt with by the collective efforts from our society. Let's put it in simple terms: homelessness is an ugly issue. It is also a fundamental problem that every individual in society is — and should be — concerned with and responsible for. We've seen too many families torn apart by a sudden wave of unemployment; students and teenagers forced to wander around the streets due to loss of housing. The place you call home one day could vanish tomorrow because of a stock market crash or a severe housing crisis.

In light of the uncertainties of the current pandemic, it has become a

harsh reality that homelessness has become an ever-imminent threat to many in the county. Experiences with homelessness were reported by 273 people in Washtenaw County in 2019. That number could see a substantial increase for the years 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19. Meanwhile, we've invested more than \$6 million into Permanent Supportive Housing programs as well as other housing projects in 2019 alone — we are talking about 6% of the county's revenue for the fiscal year. Despite all the efforts, the ultimate goal to eliminate homelessness seems to be a long way off. Funds in place. Projects in progress. Housing in construction. So, what is the matter now?

We don't talk about homelessness, even though it is right around the corner. South State St. cuts through downtown Ann Arbor, splitting the commercial area from the U-M Diag, creating two wholly different worlds. On the side of the Diag, you'll find yourself in a pleasing environment, surrounded by historic buildings and trees and shrubs that are taken care of daily. Walking past the Diag to the other side of the street, it's a whole different scene. The roads become somewhat dusty and perhaps a little

sticky to walk on. Gums are callously stuck onto the telephone poles and walls, and you'll almost always spot one or more homeless people hanging around or sitting on the sidewalk in front of the 7-Eleven. These all take place just a few yards away from the beautiful and serene campus of the University of Michigan. As the largest employer of the city and a school that strives to promote the value of inclusion around its community, why does it get so exclusive when it comes to the physical boundaries of the campus?

We don't talk about homelessness, even though it is happening right at this moment. The ongoing spikes of the pandemic are still daunting and traumatizing our communities, creating one of the most severe housing crises seen in decades. One in five rental households in Michigan has already fallen behind on their payments, and this number is anticipated to increase in the future. College students like me are also vulnerable in such scenarios, as we lack sources of income to support ourselves, let alone paying for housing in addition to heavy student loans.

see **HOMELESSNESS** page 10 ➡

THANK YOU WASHTENAW COUNTY

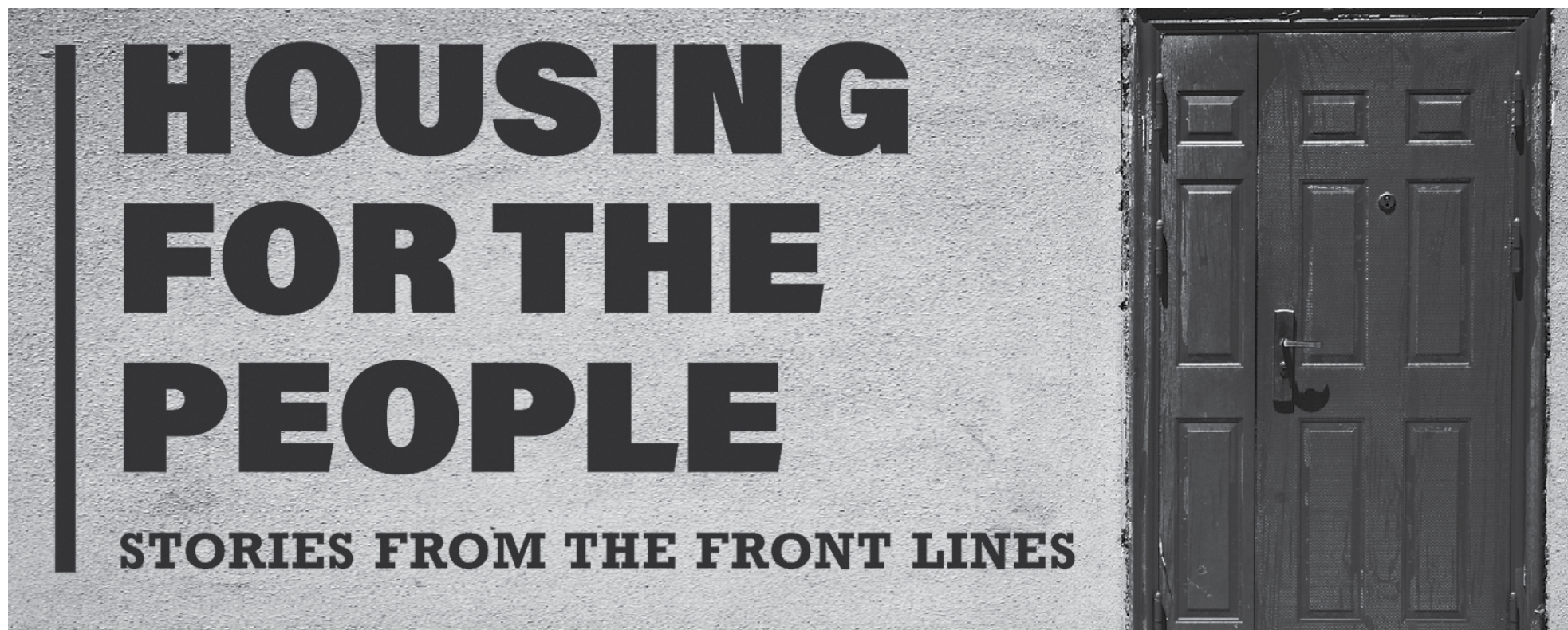
For seeing the BIG PICTURE

We're looking at where each of our institutions fit in the system. The millage supports collaborations that help us understand the roles we play in community mental health.

REILEY CURRAN
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT MANAGER,
ST. JOSEPH MERCY CHELSEA

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washtenaw.org/millage



Housing for the People is a column produced by the International Network of Street Papers from people on the frontlines of the housing justice movement in America and beyond.

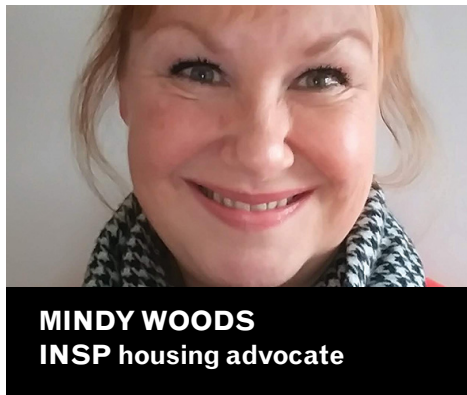
We got into our apartment right before Christmas — it was the best gift!

Shame. Overwhelmed. Embarrassment. Humiliation. Anxiety. Fear. Grief. These emotions are just some of what we were feeling every day in 2011 when we lost our apartment and became homeless.

It is our job as parents to protect our children, but I could not fulfill my duty. My son and I lived in an apartment, and unbeknownst to us, black mold growing in the walls was slowly poisoning us. After months of illness, my son got hospitalized with fungus growing in his esophagus. My son has Type 1 Diabetes, and I had been diagnosed with multiple auto-immune diseases myself. The secondary black mold poisoning had significantly compounded our health issues, and I knew we could no longer stay in our home. So, we packed up what items we could salvage and evacuated. We had to leave behind all our furniture and anything else that had mold spores on it.

We had no family in the area, and I was too humiliated to tell my closest friends what was happening. For some reason, letting a couple of acquaintances know that we were "in transition" seemed more palatable than admitting I could not keep a roof over our heads. So, we stayed on a couch, a floor, and a futon of these two sets of friends in two different cities for four months while we waited to have an intake appointment at the only shelter in our local region.

On the first school day after staying the weekend at one of the homes, I dropped my son off at the front door of the building and told him I would find



MINDY WOODS
INSP housing advocate

us a stable place by the time school was out. I kissed him goodbye, then pulled around to the back parking lot and parked in the spot farthest from the building so nobody would see me. The house we were "couch surfing" in was 30 minutes away, and I couldn't afford to drive back and forth twice a day. I also naively thought I could make a couple of calls and find either a shelter to take us in or a program to help us get into a new apartment. I had no idea how wrong I was.

I lowered my seat so I wouldn't be seen and pulled out my pre-paid cell phone. I was still waiting to receive Social Security Disability, so I had no money for anything other than the bare necessities, including a cell phone plan, so I had to use my minutes wisely. I spent the day calling over 50 organizations and agencies looking for help, but none of them had funding left or space to take us in. I pulled back up to the front of the building at the end of the school day to pick my son up, feeling defeated and in shock that this was our reality. I swallowed the

lump in my throat, blinked back the tears, and told my son things were taking a little longer than expected. Then we made the 30-minute trek back to our friend's house.

Four months later during the intake appointment, I was told there was no space in the homeless shelter, so we were put in a motel for six weeks while waiting for a room to become available. The school year had just started, and I was doing everything I could to make our stay seem like we were on vacation, all while keeping our situation a secret.

One morning as we were leaving our room to take my son to school, we heard another door close. When we looked over, we were horrified to see my son's friend and his dad leaving their room. They looked as embarrassed as we felt, and when I asked why they were there, the dad said they had lost their home when the wife became sick and lost her job. That is the day I realized that homelessness could happen to anyone, for any reason, at any time. When we got to the school, I parked my car, took a deep breath, and went inside to let the staff know what was going on. To my surprise, they had a Homeless Liaison on staff, because there was a need.

After six weeks in the motel, we finally got a room at the shelter. We stayed there for three and a half months, where we met several other moms and their kids. I heard many different stories of what led the families to lose their homes. Domestic violence, job loss, divorce, and medical

issues were the most common, and of course, lack of affordable rentals. And in each story, and on each face, there was pain and trauma.

We got into our new apartment right before Christmas, and it was the best gift! We quickly set up our home and got my son transferred to his new school. We were finally getting our life back on track. I completed the 18-month housing program we were in through the shelter, and then received a Section 8 Rental Assistance voucher. We could finally breathe again.

Today my son and I are both stable tenants, but the emotional toll of our journey is still with us. Given the high cost of housing, as renters, we never feel totally secure. At any given moment, the next rent increase, or any number of other reasons, could put us at risk of losing our stability and experiencing homelessness all over again. It's something that's always on my mind. We all want to maintain a safe place to live for our families. As the old saying goes, there really is no place like home.

Mindy Woods is a Gulf War Navy veteran and a single mother. She has experienced homelessness twice in the last 10 years. She serves on multiple boards and commissions and is a founding member of the Resident Action Project in Washington state. She is a tireless housing and social justice advocate and shares her story to affect public perception and create policy change.

Housing justice as a central voting issue

We are 50 years into the affordable housing crisis and it's not getting better. Across the country people are scraping by to make ends meet and with gentrification rising, finding affordable housing gets harder and harder each day. It is time for progressive politicians to catch up to the rising affordable housing movement. There is a great opportunity for progressive candidates and policymakers to show leadership. The global pandemic of COVID-19 has exacerbated the housing crisis while bringing more awareness and momentum to system changes than ever before. This has made pro-housing policies a political rallying cry. Advocates and social action agencies should focus more attention on building momentum by pushing candidates and elected officials to prioritize housing in their platforms and while they are elected officials. There should be a more centralized focus on empowering both traditional and non-traditional voters through challenging them to hold decision and policy-makers accountable on prioritizing housing in their campaigns and while holding office to receive their support and vote at the ballot box.

Some politicians run as progressives and then, once elected, betray their supporters and curry favor with their former opponents. Recent research has linked government actions, such as eviction moratoria, to



JANIAH MILLER
INSP housing advocate

lower transmission and mortality rates from COVID-19. These studies point to the importance of government action to stabilize outcomes for the most impacted communities. These measures have been crucial lifelines to housing insecure consumers, however, many of these measures are nearing or have already reached their expiration dates. Given the widening gaps brought by the pandemic, addressing disparities in housing insecurity will play a key role in addressing the nation's racial inequities. With elections happening year-round, elected officials have the necessary power to affect the change we need to see happen as communities are continually being devastated across the country.

Building momentum around issues of housing justice in local and statewide elections is growing across the country. There are organizations like the National Low Income Housing

Coalition (NLIHC) who have had civic engagement campaigns that focus on affordable housing and individuals experiencing homelessness. In 2020 NLIHC launched 'Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020' which was a non-partisan campaign to register, educate, and mobilize more low-income renters and affordable housing and affordable housing advocates to be involved in voting. This is important as low-income renters and homeowners are underrepresented among voters.

There is opportunity for local organizations to create similar initiatives to the one NLIHC proposed. This fall Cincinnati Action for Housing Now launched a civic engagement initiative focusing on city council candidates. This was a highly competitive race as it is the largest field of candidates running within the last 30 years with 30 candidates on the ballot. Through this effort they hosted Cincinnati's Housing Justice two-night candidate forum in which we surveyed the community to get responses as to what questions they would want to see city council candidates answer. After the two-night forum we released Cincinnati's first Housing Justice Voter Empowerment Guide. Their hope was for voters to use their power to vote for only those who they believe will passionately work for housing justice. The work Cincinnati Action for Housing Now did this fall is a great

example of how local organizations can be more engaged in changing policy discussions in their communities.

Organizations and entities should be working continuously to elevate affordable housing and homeownership as a top priority in their communities. This can be done through supporting the work of local organizations to increase voter registration, turnout, and education among low-income renters and homeowners, the unhoused and their allies. The continued advocacy needs to focus on building their energy to sustain momentum around engaging the community on issues of housing inequity through pushing for serious solutions.

Janiah Miller is currently pursuing her master's in public administration and social justice at the University of Cincinnati. Her advocacy has taken many forms: she provided support to political campaigns and offices, assisted in legislative and constituent support, both locally and nationally, and built intersectional coalitions within the community. Her passion areas are housing equity through an economic justice lens, education and neighborhood safety.

insp

Like the air we breathe, housing is a human need

We live in a deep economic crisis that's devastating families across the nation. From lack of affordable housing, access to childcare and jobs with living wages, families are struggling to survive. This is not a new phenomenon; the pandemic has just made it much worse.

The most critical issue on which we build our lives is housing as it is the foundation for which we build our lives. There is no excuse that in the richest country in the world we have so many of our neighbors, including children, living on the streets or having to spending so much of their income on rent or a mortgage that they are barely keeping their heads above the water.

Take my case, for example. I spent three of my five years in Oregon without a home, living in the national forest with my husband and two young kids who are now ages 11 and 9. We moved from Florida thinking the housing



MANDEE SEELY
INSP housing advocate

crisis might be better in the West, but it's worse. I was making \$19 an hour before being laid off due to COVID and I still couldn't afford to rent in my community. The only reason we were able to obtain housing was because of federal housing programs, which remain severely underfunded.

Indeed, we need solutions and policies that assure all of us have a place to call home. That must be the American dream, embracing our values for a

caring economy that uplifts families regardless of how much money they have or where they were born.

Over the last several decades, the United States government has underfunded and undermined federal housing programs for the most economically vulnerable. It is time for a transformative housing agenda that guarantees homes for all.

To recover beyond the pandemic, families require transforming housing into a system that is equitable through bolder changes and longer-term investments. Massive investments in housing must be used to provide Americans with a place to sleep, rest, share meals and live their lives. Let them feel the relief they have needed by helping secure housing in our communities and by helping our families.

Housing is critical community infrastructure that must be planned, operated and financed for public good. Let's do the right thing and invest in

building, maintaining and preserving affordable housing in America. The need is dire and will only continue to get worse. Like air to breathe and food to eat, safe, stable, affordable housing is a basic human need. Without it, folks will continue living in survival mode and unable to focus the opportunity of a better life.

It's time for our elected leaders everywhere to vote for change and support investments in things like childcare, rent assistance, public housing, and homeless services. It's time to give individuals and families across our country hope for a brighter tomorrow. There's no better time than the present.

Mande Seely is a Florida grown advocate with lived experience of addiction and houselessness who has found her community in Central Oregon. When she's not trying to save the world, she enjoys exploring, hiking and reading to expand her body, mind and soul.

SHELTER

Robert J Delonis Center
312 W Huron St.
734-662-2829

Housing Access for
Washtenaw County (HAWC)
734-961-1999
M-F: 8:30am-5pm

Safehouse
4100 Clark Rd.
24 hr crisis/help line: 734-995-5444
M-F: 9am-5pm

HOT MEALS

Robert J Delonis Center
312 W Huron St.
734-662-2829
Lunch: M-F 12-1pm, Sat & Sun 3-4pm
Dinner: M-F 5:30-6:30pm

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
306 N Division St.
734-663-0518
Breakfast: 7:30-8:30am, 7 days a wk

MENTAL HEALTH

Community Mental Health
555 Towner St. (Ypsilanti)
M-F: 8:30am-5pm
CRISIS HOTLINE: 734-544-3050

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Friends in Deed
1196 Ecorse Rd. (Ypsilanti)
Help Line: 734-484-4357
Circles Line: 734-340-9042
Administrative Line: 734-485-7658
Helpline@FriendsinDeedMI.org

SOS Community Services
114 N River St. (Ypsilanti)
734-484-5411

LEGAL SUPPORT

Legal Services of
South Central Michigan
15 S. Washington St. (Ypsilanti)
734-665-6181
M-F: 9am-5pm

Washtenaw County Prosecutor's
Conviction Integrity & Expungement
Unit (CIEU)
888-783-8190
M-Th: 9am-5pm, F: 9am-1pm
CIEU@washtenaw.org
expungement@mwse.org

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Michigan Works
304 Harriet St. (Ypsilanti)
Mon, Wed, Fri: 8am-5pm
Tues: 8am-7pm
734-714-9814

SHOWERS/LAUNDRY

Mercy House
805 W Huron St.
734-678-9818
Sat breakfast 10am-2pm

Peace House Ypsi
706 Davis (Ypsilanti)
734-754-0648
Sun brunch 10am-1pm

Journey of Faith New Beginnings
Homeless Ministry
1900 Manchester Rd.
734-945-7825
M-W by appointment
Fri food distribution

DRUG/ALCOHOL TREATMENT

Spera Detox
502 W Huron St.
734-669-8265

Home of New Vision's
Engagement Center
103 Arnet St. (Ypsilanti)
Open 24 hrs, 18+ years only
734-879-1101

COVID FUND ACCESS

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Emergency Funding
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Sudoku ★★★☆☆ 4puz.com

8	2	3				7	1	5
			8		5			
	6						2	
	3	5		7		6	4	
			4		6			
	4	7		8		1	3	
	8						9	
			2		3			
9	1	2				3	5	7

Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.

2	5	3	8	4	9	2	1	6
1	8	4	3	6	2	9	5	7
9	6	2	1	5	7	4	8	3
6	3	1	2	8	5	7	4	9
2	7	5	9	3	4	8	6	1
8	4	9	6	7	1	5	3	2
4	2	8	7	1	3	6	9	5
3	9	6	5	2	8	1	7	4
5	1	7	4	9	6	3	2	8

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

WORD SEARCH

M	A	C	B	E	T	H	4	C	A	R	R	I	E	J
D	E	E	N	I	E	8	J	A	N	E	E	Y	R	E
F	F	F	M	H	9	D	A	I	V	A	N	H	O	E
Y	T	O	W	1	V	D	L	I	S	C	P	H	A	T
P	A	N	D	O	R	A	H	Y	L	F	D	L	P	H
Q	R	O	B	I	N	S	O	N	C	R	U	S	O	E
E	A	T	F	Q	V	B	K	I	W	C	N	I	L	I
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A	A	J	J	L	R	B	D	N	H	G	G	D	Y	O
X	D	H	E	N	R	Y	I	V	F	A	L	X	E	T
Y	T	H	E	A	E	N	E	I	D	I	M	E	H	N
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H	A	R	D	T	I	M	E	S	P	Z	D	B	L	T

➡ HOMELESSNESS from page 7

We're frustrated by the inactions of the U-M Board of Regents when the university was requested by the Ann Arbor City Council to accommodate homeless people in the school dormitory, where plenty of empty rooms were readily available in the absence of students. Under such dire circumstances, we've barely witnessed any serious actions taking place, or relevant issues being addressed in public. We don't talk about homelessness, even though we know exactly what it is. Homelessness is never a simple term that can be attributed to one single cause — racism, poverty, income disparity, substance abuse, gender inequality and so many other societal issues are involved and intertwined. These issues are oftentimes so heavily related, that one cannot speak about one without mentioning the other. Further, when a local organization like Groundcover News strives to promote these messages in our community, why would U-M prohibit the selling of Groundcover issues on campus to the student population?

These past decades, it has become a commonly acknowledged supposition that homelessness is an issue that is practically impossible to eradicate from our society; therefore, implicitly avoiding discussion of this issue has naturally become the easier "solution" than actually addressing the problem itself. We're cool with shouting "End Homelessness" in the crowd, but what about shouting "End Homelessness, and Racism, and Poverty, and Income Disparity, and Gender Inequality" all at once? We're too tired, uncommitted and, perhaps, sometimes too indifferent to do that. Let's admit it: most human beings are filled with greed and selfishness. Our innate desire to pursue wealth and self-interest is what drives our civilization to grow, technology to develop, living standards to improve. It spurs creativity and productivity that advance our society, but it is also pushes us apart with inequality. In the pursuit of surplus value, we are turned against each other by conflicting interests and desires. When more educational institutions get privatized, students of color and low-income students are less likely to

receive adequate educational resources. When real estate developers turn their focus to constructing excessive deluxe units in the suburb, the homeless community is one step further away from acquiring affordable housing in the city. When the private benefit is weighed over the collective good of a society, the balance of interests inevitably tilts towards the wealthy and individuals in power; this leaves the poor and the disadvantaged an unfair share of social benefits compared to what they deserve. I am no economist, no social worker, no public policy specialist, no state governor, no local business owner. Yet, a truth has crystalized for me, that the rather indifferent attitudes the general public has towards homelessness, are slowly corroding the unity and the values of our society as a whole. You've seen it. I've seen it. We've all seen it. We just don't talk about it. Seriously, we have to start talking about homelessness. This talk has to be stronger. We have to be louder. The issue of homelessness has to be addressed in a more proactive

manner. It should not be treated as a stigma or degradation, but rather as an urgent social problem demanding collective efforts and engagement from our community. Community engagement is a big word, but everything starts from something small: a quick search of "Homelessness in Washtenaw County" on Google, a short conversation with your neighborhood about the financial hardships that the homeless shelter a few blocks away is going through, or two-hours of volunteer service at the Ann Arbor Community Center on a Saturday afternoon that you would've probably spent browsing social media. Thanks to English 126, for the past months I was exposed to different writing styles and structures other than traditional argumentative pieces I practiced during high school, as well as a wide range of topics and issues of which I'd never considered myself to be fully conscious and related to. Above all, for the first time, I was able to truly engage with our community in a creative way — through writing, I can talk.

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JANUARY 2022 EVENTS AT BETHLEHEM
In person events are just starting to resume at BUCC. We ask that you visit the church website at: bethlehem-ucc.org for the most up-to-date calendar and event information.

Sunday Worship Time
10:00 am In-person
and via Live Stream and
Radio Broadcast

WORD BANK

Hard Times	Othello	
1984	Henry IV	Pandora
Apology	Henry VI	Robinson Crusoe
Carrie	Infidel	Roots
Deenie	Ivanhoe	Shiver
Dracula	Jane Eyre	Tara Road
Dune	Jo's Boys	The Aeneid
Emma	King Lear	The Idiot
Ethan Frome	Macbeth	Walden
Hamlet	Oliver Twist	

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Crisp crust pizza

ELIZABETH BAUMAN
Groundcover contributor

This recipe comes from the kitchen of Ray Palombella. It was gifted to me by her granddaughter Stephanie Christensen. This is similar to the pizza I made as a kid for my family, so good!

Dough for crust:

½ teaspoon granulated sugar
1 package active dry yeast
1 cup lukewarm water
3 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 Tablespoon olive oil

Dissolve yeast and sugar in lukewarm water, set aside. In a large mixing bowl, combine 2 and ¾ cups flour and the salt. Stir yeast mixture and oil into the flour until a dough forms.

On a lightly floured work surface, knead the dough for about 10 minutes, working in the remaining flour until the dough is sticky.

Place in an oiled bowl, cover with a plastic wrap and let rise until it doubles in size (about 40 minutes). Punch down and roll out.

Makes one 16-inch crust.

Sauce:

3 Tablespoons olive oil
1 medium onion, finely chopped
2 teaspoons dried basil, crumbled
1 teaspoon dried oregano, crumbled
2 large garlic cloves, minced
2 Tablespoons tomato paste
1 28-ounce can crushed tomatoe



In a saucepan, heat oil over medium heat then add onion, basil and oregano. Cook until onion softens slightly, stirring occasionally (about 6 minutes).

Mix in garlic and cook for 2 more minutes. Add paste and cook for 3 minutes, then stir in tomatoes and their juice.

Crush the tomatoes and continue to simmer on low until the sauce becomes very thick. Add salt and pepper to taste

Assembly:

Top pizza crust with the sauce, cheese and your favorite items. Bake at 350 degrees for about 15 minutes (watch carefully). Serve hot.



St. Francis invites you
to join in Mass by LiveStream:

to come and meet Christ Jesus who
loves each one of us and who is really
present here to save us.

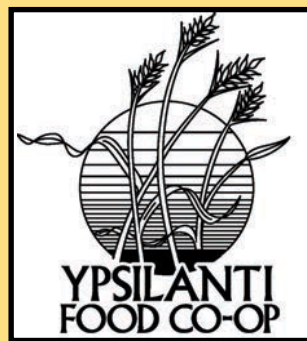
*"If God were your Father, you would love me,
for I came from God and am here;
I did not come on my own, but he sent me."*
+ Christ Jesus (John 8:42)

Mass Times:

Saturday Vigil 5 pm & 7 pm (español);
Sunday 8:30am, 10:30am, 12:30pm.
Daily Mon-Fri at 9:15am; Thurs Mass is
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Spanish: stfrancisa2.com/misa
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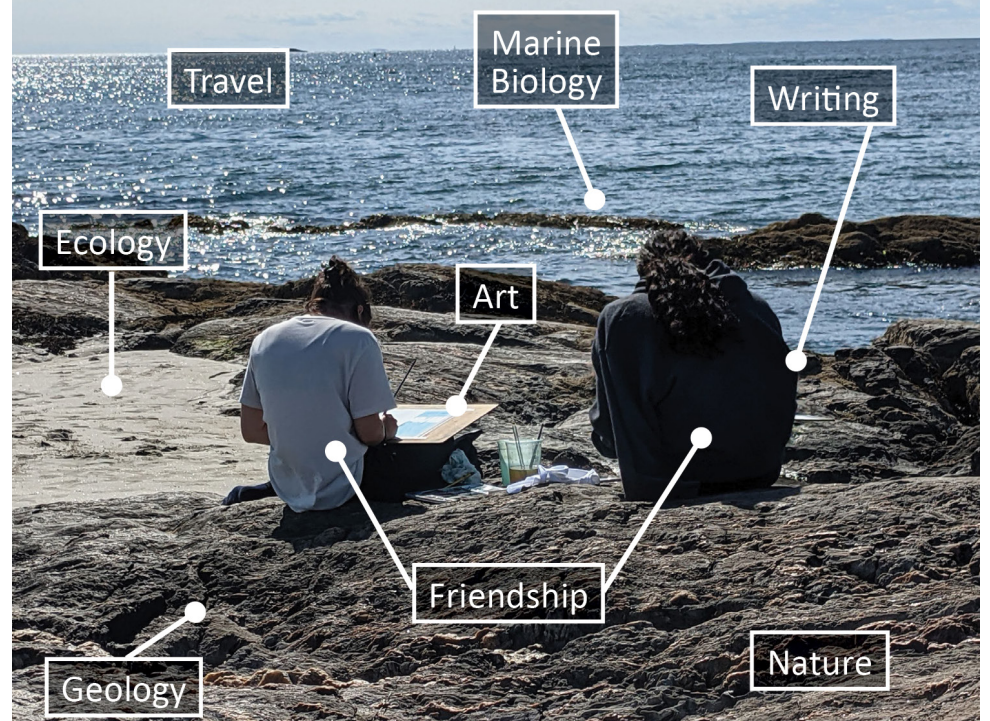
7 principles of Co-ops
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Must present coupon at time of purchase

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